

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-05 IO-11 DHA-02

/069 W

----- 128799

O R 130851Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6003

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 1886

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, KS

SUBJECT: INDEPENDENCE DAY AFFAIR IN PERSPECTIVE

REF: (A) SEOUL 1832 110904Z MAR 76, (B) SEOUL 1800 101140Z MAR 76  
(C) SEOUL 9542 120045Z DEC 75

SUMMARY: MARCH 1 INDEPENDENCE DAY AFFAIR WHEN ANTI-  
GOVERNMENT STATEMENT WAS READ DURING A RELIGIOUS SERVICE  
AT MYONGDONG CATHEDRAL, WAS CONSISTENT WITH RECENT COURSE  
OF EVENTS AND PREDICTABLE. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE USUAL  
DRAMATIC AND SURPRISING ASPECTS TO IT, GOVERNMENT'S  
REACTION IN ARRESTING KIM DAE JUNG AND TEN OTHER  
"MASTERMINDS", WHILE CONTINUING INVESTIGATION OF  
OTHERS, WAS ALSO CONSISTENT WITH ITS PAST POLITICAL MOVES  
AND TO LARGE EXTENT ALSO PREDICTABLE. WATCHING THIS INEVITABLE  
PLAYING OUT OF ROLES MOST KOREAN POLITICAL OBSERVERS  
WE HAVE TALKED TO ARE BEMUSED AND INCREDULOUS THAT TWO  
OPPOSING PARTIES WOULD GO TO SUCH EXTREMES IN WHAT THEY  
SEE AS POINTLESS EXERCISE BENEFITTING NO ONE. IN STRONGEST  
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AND BEST POSITION TO HELP ITS OWN CAUSE, ROKG HAS TO ITS

CREDIT SHOWN SOME MODERATION AND SENSITIVITY TO OVERSEAS  
OPINION. IT CLEARLY DESIRES TO AVOID ROUGH MEASURES  
WHICH WOULD PROVOKE INCIDENT AND CONSEQUENT  
PUBLIC REACTION OF NATURE DECLARATION SOUGHT TO INSPIRE.  
END SUMMARY.

1. PERHAPS MOST STRIKING ASPECT OF MARCH 1 INDEPENDENCE  
DAY AFFAIR AND ITS AFTERMATH HAS BEEN ITS GREEK TRAGIC  
QUALITY OF INEVITABILITY. AS REPORTED SEOUL 9542, ON  
DECEMBER 10, KIM DAE-CHUNG, DEEPLY FRUSTRATED BY  
OPPOSITION'S INABILITY TO ORGANIZE AND ACT THROUGHOUT  
MOST OF 1975, TOLD POLCOUNS AS HE HAD OTHERS IN AMERICAN  
AND PRESS COMMUNITIES, THAT THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES  
OPPOSED TO PARK WERE RAPIDLY BEING FORCED BACK TO  
THEIR LAST LINE OF DEFENSE AND THAT DRAMATIC, FORCEFUL ACTION  
WAS NEEDED TO TURN THE TIDE. SPEAKING CAREFULLY SO THAT  
WE WOULD NOT MISS THE POINT, KIM STATED THAT HE WOULD BE  
WILLING, INDEED WISHED, TO BE PUT INTO JAIL, AND WOULD  
EVEN GIVE UP HIS LIFE IN AN EFFORT TO EVOKE A MASS  
RESPONSE AND TO BRING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT BACK TO  
KOREA. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE WAS IN TOUCH WITH STUDENTS  
AND THOUGHT IT LIKELY THAT THERE WOULD BE OPEN  
MANIFESTATIONS OF OPPOSITION BY STUDENTS AND RELIGIOUS  
GROUPS IN THE SPRING BECAUSE THESE GROUPS REALIZE  
THAT UNLESS THEY ACTED SOON THEY WOULD BE UNABLE TO  
ACT AT ALL.

2. SIMILARLY, ON DECEMBER 4, FORMER PRESIDENT YUN PO-SON  
TOLD EMBOFF THAT NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE,  
INCLUDING FARMERS AND SOLDIERS BUT NOT GENERALS, WERE  
AGAINST THE PARK GOVERNMENT AND AN EXPLOSION WAS COMING  
BUT HE COULDN'T SPECIFY THE TIME. CHURCH LEADERS EXPRESSED  
SIMILAR VIEWS.

3. GOVERNMENT, WHICH WAS FULLY AWARE OF CONTENT OF THESE  
VIEWS, CLAIMS FURTHER THAT FOUR GROUPS (THURSDAY PRAYER  
GROUP, GALLILEE CHURCH GROUP, SOME YOUNG CATHOLIC PRIESTS,  
AND REMNANTS OF NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RESTORATION OF  
DEMOCRACY) CONSPIRED TO CREATE EVENT DESIGNED TO  
PRECIPITATE MASS OVERTHROW MOVEMENT. IN ADDITION TO EVIDENCE  
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OF PRINTING EQUIPMENT AND ALLEGED CONFESSIONS FROM THOSE  
INVOLVED, AMERICAN AFFAIRS BUREAU DIRECTOR PARK SUNG YONG  
HAS CITED TO US SEVERAL PRAYER MEETINGS INVOLVING  
THESE GROUPS - AT CHONJU ON OCTOBER 20, WONJU, JANUARY 23,  
AND AGAIN AT CHONJU, FEBRUARY 16 - AS EVIDENCE THAT POLITICAL  
CONSPIRING WAS PROCEEDING UNDER CLOAK OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY.  
OUR INDEPENDENT CONTACTS BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT  
CONFIRM OUTLINE OF THESE FACTS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS CONSIDERABLE

DIFFERENCE OVER WHAT WAS ACTUALLY SAID IN VARIOUS MEETINGS  
AND DEGREE TO WHICH MEMBERS WERE ACTUALLY CONSPIRING.

4. ALTHOUGH CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT ACTIVISTS HAVE JOINED  
HANDS IN THE PAST TO HOLD SERVICES WITH AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT  
FLAVOR, IT IS OUR VIEW SHARED BY MOST INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS  
THAT THE ORGANIZERS OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY AFFAIR, EVEN  
THOUGH THEY HAVE CONSISTENT RECORD OF OPPOSITION TO ROKG,  
DO NOT COMPRISE EITHER LARGE OR VERY EFFECTIVE POLITICAL  
GROUPING. INDEED PERVASIVE GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE OF  
RELIGIOUS GROUPS MAKES THIS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCOMPLISH.  
IT IS PROBABLY MORE ACCURATE TO DESCRIBE THEM AS SMALL GROUP  
OF CHRISTIANS WHO, DRIVEN BY THEIR BELIEFS AND THEIR NEED  
TO KEEP THE OPPOSITION ALIVE, WERE ABLE TO COLLABORATE  
TEMPORARILY IN ORDER TO ORGANIZE READING OF SOMEWHAT  
TIMOROUS AND IN ECONOMIC TERMS AT LEAST HIGHLY INACCURATE  
ANTI-GOVERNMENT STATEMENT DURING A RELIGIOUS SERVICE  
ON A DAY OF SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE TO KOREANS.

5. IT IS APPARENT THAT THOSE INVOLVED IN THE EVENT  
KNEW THAT THEY WERE DELIBERATELY ISSUING A CHALLENGE  
TO THE GOVERNMENT WHICH IT COULD NOT IGNORE. THEY  
WERE WILLING TO RISK IMPRISONMENT IN THE SINGLE HOPE  
THAT BY THEIR SACRIFICE THEY COULD GALVANIZE STUDENTS  
AND OTHER OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ACTION.  
AT SAME TIME IT IS HARD TO BELIVE THAT ORGANIZERS  
FELT THAT THIS WAS MORE THAN FORLORN HOPE. IT THEREFORE  
LIKELY THAT THEIR REAL TARGET WAS OVERSEAS, ESPECIALLY  
IN THE U.S., WHERE ROKG IS ALREADY UNDER FIRE AND WHERE  
KNOWN SYMPATHIZERS COULD BE EXPECTED PROMPTLY TO BRING  
PRESSURE AGAINST PREDICTABLE ROKG REACTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
GROUNDS.

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-05 IO-11 DHA-02

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O R 130851Z MAR 76  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6004  
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 1886

6. THE ROKG HAS AT LEAST PARTIALLY FOLLOWED THE SCRIPT. PLACED IN A DILEMMA BY THE INDEPENDENCE DAY AFFAIR, THE GOVERNMENT AFTER SEVERAL DAYS INVESTIGATION AND THEN RELEASE OF SEVERAL OF THOSE IMPLICATED, DECIDED IT HAD TO ARREST KIM DAE CHUNG AND TEN OTHERS INCLUDING SEVERAL PRIESTS AND DISSIDENT UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS RECENTLY FIRED FROM THEIR JOBS FOR POLITICAL REASONS. SCORE ONE FOR THE OPPOSITION; MR. KIM DAE CHUNG AND OTHERS MANAGED TO GET THEMSELVES IN JAIL.

7. AT SAME TIME HOWEVER, KEENLY AWARE OF ITS ALREADY TARNISHED IMAGE ABROAD, ROKG IS BEHAVING MORE CIRCUMSPECTLY AND CAUTIOUSLY IN THIS CASE THAN IT HAS IN OTHERS. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT DESPITE THE TOUGH LANGUAGE USED IN THE PROSECUTOR'S STATEMENT THE TWENTY PERSONS ACCUSED OF AGITATING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE CHARGED WITH VIOLATIONS OF EM-9 RATHER THAN UNDER THE MORE SERIOUS ANTI-COMMUNIST NATIONAL SECURITY LAWS WHICH CAN LEAD TO MORE SEVERE SENTENCES INCLUDING DEATH. MOREOVER, AS KCIA, AND MOFA OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPLAINED, MANY HAVE BEEN RELEASED AND NOT ARRESTED: THE WOMEN, WHO WERE USED AS COURIERS AMONG OTHER THINGS, BECAUSE IT WOULD BE "TOO SENSITIVE;" YUN PO-SUN BECAUSE OF HIS AGE AND PRESTIGE AS FORMER PRESIDENT; AND CHONG IL-HYONG BECAUSE AS ASSEMBLYMAN HE CAN OLY BE ARRESTED BY VOTE OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. AS FOR THOSE IN JAIL WE KNOW THAT KIM DAE CHUNG HAS BEEN GIVEN "CARE" PACKAGES FROM HOME AND WE ARE TOLD EXTRA-ORDINARY MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN WITH RESPECT TO HIS POOR HEALTH. IN OTHER WORDS GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN AT PAINS TO EXPLAIN THAT POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY REGARDED, THE LAW HAS BEEN FOLLOWED, AND DUE PROCESS UNDER KOREAN LAW IS BEING ACCORDED THE ACCUSED.

8. WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WILL IN THE LAST ANALYSIS BE SUCCESSFUL IN CONVINCING ITS AUDIENCE AND CONTAINING REACTION IS OF COURSE PARTIALLY BEYOND OUR KEN HERE IN SEOUL. IN SEOUL ITSELF WE HAVE REPORTS OF SEVERAL INSTANCES OF LEAFLET PASSING

AT THE UNIVERSITIES, AND ONE OR TWO ABORTIVE ATTEMPTS ON THE PART OF STUDENTS TO DEMONSTRATE. STUDENTS CLEARLY REMAIN DISGRUNTLED ABOUT THEIR POLITICALLY CIRCUMSCRIBED SITUATION. THE GOVERNMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF THIS SITUATION HOWEVER, AND HAS DOUBLED ITS WATCHFULNESS ON CAMPUS AND ELSEWHERE AMONG DISSIDENT GROUPS, AS WE HAVE REPORTED OVER THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS, WE CONTINUE TO FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION CAN BE MARSHALLED AND A MAJOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT OUTBREAK CAN BE CONDUCTED.

9. WE HAVE HEARD RUMORS FOR PAST TWO DAYS THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER CARDINAL KIM SU-HWAN MAY MAKE A STATEMENT OF SOME KIND REGARDING THE INCIDENT; PREVIOUSLY HE HAS BEEN REPORTED AS SAYING FROM THE PULPIT THAT THE INDEPENDENCE DAY DECLARATION READING WAS A MISUSE OF THE RELIGIOUS FORUM. CARDINAL KIM HAS ALWAYS BEEN CIRCUMSPECT IN THE PAST AND HAS CAREFULLY PLACED THE LONG-TERM INTEREST OF HIS CHURCH AHEAD OF HIS OWN RESERVATIONS REGARDING GOVERNMENT SUPPRESSION OF DISSENT. BECAUSE OF HIS PRESTIGE A STRONG ANTI-GOVERNMENT STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT COULD CREATE REAL DIFFICULTIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT. BUT WE WILL JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHETHER THE CARDINAL SPEAKS OUT AND IN WHAT FASHION.

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10. OUTLOOK IS ALSO OF COURSE DEPENDENT ON FURTHER ACTION GOVERNMENT TAKES AGAINST THOSE INVOLVED. IN CHARACTERISTIC FASHION PRESIDENT PARK HAS STRUCK HARD IN FIRST INSTANCE BUT WE ALSO KNOW FROM MANY PAST EXPERIENCES THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF INITIAL ORDERS IS OFTEN LESS SEVERE. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ELEVEN ACCUSED OF BEING RING LEADERS CAN BE LET OFF ENTIRELY. HOWEVER THEIR FINAL SENTENCES COULD BE RELATIVELY LIGHT AND THE NINE WHO ARE BOOKED BUT NOT UNDER DETENTION COULD BE GIVEN SUSPENDED SENTENCES. THE TRIAL PROCESS MAY BE DRAWN OUT.

11. WHILE IT WAS ENTIRELY PREDICTABLE THAT ROKG WOULD TAKE SOME FIRM ACTION AGAINST THOSE INVOLVED IN MYONGDONG AFFAIR, ROKG HAS MOVED WITH SAME CAUTION. DILEMMA FACING ROKG IS NEED TO TRY TO CONTAIN REACTION PARTICULARLY OVERSEAS VS. WHAT IT VIEWS AS NECESSITY TO UPHOLD ITS AUTHORITY AND TO PREVENT INCIDENTS THAT WOULD INCITE STUDENTS OR OTHER POTENTIAL MASS DISSIDENTS. AS INDICATED THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT GENERAL PUBLIC HAS BEEN GREATLY DISTURBED OR THAT ACTIONS TO DATE HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT TO AROUSE STUDENT OR PUBLIC OPINION. RETURNS FROM UNITED STATES AND JAPAN COULD CONCEIVABLY ALTER THIS SITUATION, BUT WE CANNOT PREDICT. UNFORTUNATELY WHAT WE CAN PREDICT IS THAT HOWEVER CAREFULLY ROKG MAY DEAL WITH MYONGDONG

PARTICIPANTS, INCIDENT AND MORE IMPORTANTLY BASIC PROBLEMS WHICH  
UNDERLIE IT WILL NOT BE SOLVED AND SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO  
HUMAN RIGHTS WILL CONTINUE TO FESTER, BOTH HERE AND ABROAD.  
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## Message Attributes

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